



United States. As the oldest city in the United States and the second oldest continuously-inhabited European settlement in the Western Hemisphere, Old San Juan's location in the heart of the Caribbean (the first area in America to be colonized and settled by Spain) provided the Spanish with a key port from which to establish their cultural, military, and political agendas throughout Spanish America. The Old San Juan Historic District/Distrito Histórico del Viejo San Juan is one of the premier colonial cities in the United States and the nation's most important and complete Spanish urban center.

- Nowhere else can such a full collection of buildings representing four centuries of Spanish culture, religion, politics, and architecture be found. The district includes the oldest house, Christian church, executive mansion, convent, and military defenses in the United States, and possibly the oldest continuously-used non-indigenous government building in the Americas. Its Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque buildings represent the sole stylistic examples of these architectural styles found anywhere in the nation.

Integrity:

- The Old San Juan Historic District retains an exceptionally high level of historic integrity evident in the preserved essential form, design, and materials associated with the period of significance. The integrity of the historic district inclusive of thoroughfares, plazas, urban blocks, spatial organization, topography, vegetation, circulation, water features, buildings and structures, and artistic components is high.
- Restoration of balustrades and wooden components has understandably occurred over the centuries; the same applies to stucco finishes. After the 1950s when the district was declared a historic zone by the Commonwealth, all rehabilitation projects (of exteriors as well as interiors) have been guided by the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña.



Owner of Property: Federal and municipal governments, Catholic Church, private owners.

Acreage of Property: Approximately 235 acres.

Origins of Nomination: The Puerto Rico SHPO, as part of the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the founding of Old San Juan (forthcoming in 2019), hired a consultant to update the 1972 National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the district. The contractor used the updated NR nomination to write an NHL nomination.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- National Historic Landmark designation will bring attention to one of the preeminent sites associated with Spanish colonial history in the United States, and the Americas, as the city prepares for the 500th anniversary-celebration of the founding of the city in 2019.
- Designation as an NHL may help the district procure grants for preservation work.
- Designation as an NHL will add an under-represented property type, those associated with Latino heritage in the U.S., to the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Allan moved, Dr. Carson

seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 11/2/12):

Carlos A. Rubio Cancela, Architect, State Historic Preservation Officer, Puerto Rico

Advisory Board Recommendation: